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A Sketch of  
Andrew Jackson,  
by himself.





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# A SKETCH

OF

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# GENERAL JACKSON:

BY HIMSELF.

*Ed. in 1857*  
CHARLES GAYARRE.

NEW ORLEANS:

PRINTED BY E. C. WHARTON, 41 CAMP STREET.

1857.

Manuscript of the history of the  
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# A SKETCH OF GENERAL JACKSON,

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BY HIMSELF.

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The number of years during which this distinguished man has been slumbering in his grave, is not yet such as to permit a just and proper appreciation of his character. The flames of political warfare through which he strode so fearlessly when alive, are extinguished, but the ashes which they have left are not yet cold; and he who should now endeavor to travel over the broad space covered by his illustrious career, with the intention of surveying the impress of his footsteps, and of passing judgment on his deeds, would discover that he is premature in attempting an excursion over a ground still heated by passions which, although hourly dying away, retain something of their original fierceness; and he would soon come to the conclusion that he had better wait until the subject of his investigations should refrigerate to the requisite degree of temperature—which can only be the work of time. No great actor on the human stage can be safely tried before the tribunal of his cotemporaries. They may be allowed to furnish the evidence, on the faith of which, when sifted, he is ultimately to be judged, but posterity alone is the competent authority to assign him his place in the annals of our race, and to award to him that reputation which is forever to be his glory or his shame. I would, therefore, shrink from giving to the public at this time a portrait of General Jackson, were I capable of drawing it, but I have thought that I could venture to present a profile view of that remarkable man for the use of future historians, and I have

called it "A Sketch of General Jackson by himself," since the features of his moral and intellectual character which it is my intention to put together, have been traced by his own hands in a series of Letters with which I have lately been entrusted, and which he had addressed to one who had been placed under his guardian care, and who has retained for his memory the deepest affection and the most enthusiastic admiration. In nothing else does man reveal himself more unguardedly, and exhibit more clearly his true nature than in his private correspondence with those he cherishes and trusts, and with whom he can forget to protect his breast with that cloak, and may be with that armour which circumstances may make it necessary for him to use in his daily intercourse with the world. These are the reliable means by which many historical characters which would have forever remained dark enigmas, or which might have been totally misrepresented, have been fully illustrated, to the delight and for the instruction of mankind. William, the champion of England's liberties, would still have been for us the same cold-blooded, soul-lacking impersonation of stern ambition, if Macaulay had not shown, with that great man's correspondence in hand, that he who seemed to have no more feeling than the steel cuirass which he wore on the battle-field, had within his stubborn heart spots almost as soft and sensitive as any to be found in woman's breast. Thus I am led to believe that a few extracts from such of General Jackson's letters as I have in my possession may exhibit that celebrated personage in a light in which many may never have expected to see him. But whatever be the result which I may obtain, I am encouraged in the attempt by the conviction that I am performing a duty, and that to place even a dimly shining lamp in the path of future historical investigation, is not to be considered too humble a task to be undertaken by the lover of justice and truth.

I have frequently heard it asserted by some who pretend to know General Jackson, that he was narrow minded and liable to take up prejudices against men and things. The sentiments which I find expressed by him in a letter addressed from the Hermitage on the 8th of January, 1821, seem to refute the impeachment:

"Dear E.—Yours of the 19th ult. has just reached me, which advises me of your return from Boston to New York, after taking a full recognizance and survey of the harbor of Boston. The experience of the hospitality of the good people of Boston ought hereafter to *prevent you from forming prejudices against any nation or people upon vague report.* Although there are many anecdotes told upon the Yankees,

*"you will find the people of New England, like all other people, a mixture of good and bad, hospitable and inhospitable, polished and unpolished; but, as a people, moral and humane."*

What can be more high-toned, more noble and more patriotic, than the following letter written by one who had been accused of being loose in morals, and who had been suspected of favoring the dark schemes of Aaron Burr? It is addressed to the same young man, his pupil, who was then an officer in the United States Army, and who, smarting perhaps under some temporary disappointment which checked his aspirations, and burning with martial desire to add new lustre to an ancestral name already celebrated in the annals of war, had consulted General Jackson on the propriety of seeking a wider field of action by entering the Russian service. Thus wrote in reply the sage and the warrior who was then resting in the shades of the Hermitage:

JANUARY 8th, 1822.

"It has been with the greatest pleasure, my young friend, that I have tendered you that advice and counsel which my experience has enabled me to give, and especially when I have believed that I could contribute to your future welfare by impressing upon your mind the importance of morality, and by directing your attention to such objects as were most likely to eventuate in your permanent interest. I have done so with the greatest cheerfulness and an eye single to your good. I trust, then, that you will view me when opposing your determination to join the Russian service and abandon that of your country, as influenced by no sinister motive, but as alive only to those prospects which may determine your reputation and the character to which you may attain as a soldier and as a citizen."

"You say that you have spent the best of your life in a profession which offers no inducements in your own country. Let me ask what is it in the profession of arms in your country that is inconsistent with the character which awaits an officer devoted to its service—prepared by science for distinction in that service, and competent to . . . (illegible) or share in its battles and dangers? What is it in the character of your country that is unworthy of your efforts to sustain it? What is it in its national feeling that cannot claim your participation? Where is the country, besides your own, whose glory is the protection of liberty and those equal rights which have long since been lost in the despotism and corruption of every European government? Where is that love of country which, living even with the chained and shackled peasantry of a monarch, despises all control? And would you renounce this sacred tie for the glory to be won in the uncertain career of a foreign emperor? Can you sacrifice the feelings which should characterize an American officer to the illusions which support royalty and conceal its corruption? I hope you could not. There are many objections, Edward, to your adopting the course which you have



“ named, but which I shall not mention, believing that you will unhesitatingly abandon a scheme which you have formed without reflection. “ It is true that the blind policy of the last Congress has limited the “ prospects of reputation and distinction in our army, but things will “ not always be as they are. The policy must change; and, independent of this, what greater incentive do you want than the persuasion “ that by improving the advantages which you now possess, you will be “ prepared to enter with distinction into the service of your country, “ when it shall need and shall ask for your service and talents. Continue your studies, and your proficiency shall be rewarded. Be industrious and you will not feel the miseries of idleness.”

This last phrase does not savor of the cock-fighting, horse-racing idler he was represented to be. But what a lofty spirit breathes throughout this whole epistle! And what is still more remarkable, is the moderation and the almost apologetic tone with which one who was believed to be the very incarnation of haughtiness and despotism, gives his views and opinions to one so much his inferior in age and position, and seeks to change the hasty resolution of a pupil on whom he had a right to exercise the authority of a father. Is that the fierce Jackson who could not brook the slightest opposition?

On the 3d of March, 1823, he wrote to the same individual:

“ I am happy to learn that your health is restored, and that justice “ has been done you at last by the chief of the Engineer Department. “ Never make enemies that you can avoid, and never permit injury “ from any source without a proper resentment.”

“ *Never make enemies that you can avoid,*” sounds like the voice of wisdom and not like that of one who had the reputation, not only of cherishing a reckless indifference to provoking enmities, but even of entertaining a strange propensity to rush into strifes, as the eagle is said to utter its most joyous shriek when the lightning plays round its head and the howling wind rocks its nest.

“ *Never permit injury from any source without a proper resentment*” puts one in mind of Polonius’ celebrated advice to his son, in Hamlet:

“ Beware

“ Of entering into a quarrel: but, being in,

“ Bear it that the opposer may beware of thee.”

This calm recommendation to his pupil is certainly no indication of the rash and fiery temper which was attributed to the illustrious chieftain, and for which he incurred so much blame. It is no sudden, impetuous outburst, but it seems to be a cool and practical appreciation of the course which, in this world, socially organized as it is at present, a man is frequently compelled to pursue in self-defence, and as a matter of

policy, even when inclination would lead to a different path. When struck on the right cheek, to turn the left to the aggressor in invitation of another blow, may be the very perfection of human and christian excellence, but it is doubtful whether in the general disregard of evangelical precepts by the bulk of mankind, existence would be safe and tolerable on such terms of submission, abnegation and meekness. The unre-sisting martyr would probably, without a special interposition of Providence, be soon torn to pieces by the wild beasts to which he would be delivered.

“You are entering into life on the military stage,” writes the hero, “and although we are now blessed with peace, it is doubtful from the “collecting cloud in Europe, how long we may enjoy that blessing. It “is in the scenes of military life that you can judge properly of men. I “cannot recommend to you a better book than the history of Sir William “Wallace for your guide, and the example of the immortal Washing-  
“ton.”

At the time when General Jackson was writing these generous recommendations to the youth for whom he had an almost parental affection, half of the papers of this Union were accusing the American Wallace who had crushed the English at New Orleans, and who was such an enthusiastic admirer of Washington, of being a blood-thirsty villain who had perpetrated the most shameful deeds, and whose tyrannical career of enormities would, if not checked, luxuriantly expand into a wider range.

“In the history of Wallace,” continues he, “you will find human “nature fully displayed, with all its envy, hatred and treachery. Adopt “his virtues, and shun the vices of his enemies; for let me assure you, “men are not now better than they were in the days of Wallace, and by “studying human nature you may come to avoid its treachery.” Jackson had, it is evident, too much judgment to indulge in foolish dreams on the newly discovered *perfectibility* of the human race, and to cant about the immaculate virtues which are said to be the necessary result of our boasted progress in civilization. Although the best of democrats, and notwithstanding the blasphemous doctrine now preached by the flatterers of the many-headed sovereign “that the voice of the people is the voice of God,” he could not delude himself with the sweet belief, nor press it upon his young friend, that “men are at this time much better “than in the days of Wallace.”

“Be not too suspicious,” adds the sage, “but never take a man to “your bosom as confidant, until you are certain he merits it. Pursue “this course, and you will be able to avoid many disagreeable occurrences,

“ and it never will be in the power of the base betrayer to injure you. “ These remarks have occurred to me to be proper to make to you, being “ advised by your letter that you will be in the city\* for six months.” All must acknowledge that this dauntless man of the sword, notwithstanding the foolhardy temerity with which he was reproached through prejudice or misconception, expresses here such sentiments as the cautious pen of the meditative and phlegmatic Benjamin Franklin himself would not have hesitated to lay down as prudential rules of conduct in all the departments of life.

In the same letter, he says: “ I have declined the mission to Mexico. “ I could be of no benefit to my country there, and in the present state “ of revolution, a minister from the United States to present credentials “ to the tyrant Iturbide, might strengthen him on his tottering throne, and “ aid him in riveting the chains of despotism upon the Mexican people. “ I can never do an act to aid tyranny and oppression,—I have therefore “ declined.”

I forget now what were the reasons then assigned by the world for General Jackson’s refusal to go to Mexico. It was no doubt attributed by his enemies to a selfish and cautious policy which aimed only at personal aggrandizement. I have neither the leisure, nor the means at hand, to gratify my curiosity and that of the reader by consulting the records of the time, but of this I am certain—that the reasons he sets down in a familiar letter, which was not intended for the public eye, and which was addressed to one whom he could have no object in deceiving by any hypocritical asseverations, are worthy of the noblest epochs of Roman virtue and Roman republicanism. In these degenerate days, when principle, honesty and talent are sacrificed to *availability*, expediency and ignorance, and in that state of political corruption and epidemical thirst and hunger after office into which we seem to have rushed, as soon as we were sure to have sealed forever the tombstone of the Bayard of Democracy and escaped from the risk of blushing for shame in his presence, it may well be doubted whether any of those demagogues who are afraid of losing their popularity at home by complying with such regulations of dress as it pleases a monarch to establish in his palace, would refuse to accept the salary of a minister plenipotentiary to an Emperor, from the fear of “ *strengthening the tyrant on his throne, and of aiding in riveting “ the chains of despotism*” upon any people in christendom.

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\* The city of Washington, where, in fact, too many precautions of the kind cannot be taken.



"If it is true," continues he, "that Spain is about to cede Cuba to England, good policy points to the course the United States ought to adopt. There cannot be an American who does not see that if Great Britain obtains the Gibraltar of the Gulf, as she holds the Gibraltar of the Mediterranean, she controls the commerce of the world, and embargoes the mouth of the Mississippi. The wisdom and energy of America must prevent this, or we are involved in a perpetual war, until Great Britain is dispossessed of it." There never was a man who, from instinct as it were, had a clearer view of the wants and interests of his country than General Jackson, and the people of the United States are every day becoming more convinced of the truth of what he asserted in 1823—that Cuba is "the Gibraltar of the Gulf," and can "embargo the mouth of the Mississippi." Thus, all the statesmen of the Union, forgetting their sectional prejudices, have agreed, I believe, on the course to be pursued, should the emergency alluded to by General Jackson ever arise.

On the 1st of May, 1823, he traced the following lines, which should be printed in letters of gold and hung up in the office of every public officer, if it were possible that any good could flow from it:

"I am much pleased to find that you have acquired such a correct opinion of human nature. In your passage through life, it will be of great advantage to you, and preserve you from many difficulties that, without this knowledge, youths are apt to fall into. It is to be deplored that men in office are apt to assume an air of mystery in discharge of their public duties. In our government mystery does not belong to it; an open, candid, virtuous course ought to be pursued by all its functionaries,—orders given in clear and positive language, easily to be understood, and words incapable of double meaning, and in all answers to necessary inquiries, positive and candid. I never have seen an occasion where candor and truth was not proper. A case in our government cannot exist where it ought not to be used; if it is proper to speak at all, it should be with candor and truth. Adopt this for your guide, let others do as they may, and you will be always right. Occasions may occur where prudence would dictate silence, but if you speak at all, let it be with candor and truth." This is admirable doctrine, and were it adhered to by those who lead and govern the people, by those Richelieus who reign in the name of King Multitude, whom they humor and delude with flatteries, genuflexions, and the mere appearance of the possession of power, whilst they riot in the real enjoyment of

what they deny to their tool, what country ours would be! But, instead of such a millenium of political purity, or anything approaching to it, what do we see? If any candidate for office before those ragamuffins who, in most cases, compose the immense majority of those packed conventions and secret oligarchies who have substituted their will and government to that of the people, were to preach the doctrine of the great apostle of democracy—of him who had as vivid a faith in the correct instincts of the masses, and as intense a love for the people, as any man that ever lived, and to declare that, if in power, he would consider that doctrine binding upon him and all those who might rely on his patronage or countenance, who doubts that this disciple of the dead patriot, this advocate of candor and truth, this inflexible enemy to compromises with what goes by the decent and courteous appellative of “the exigencies of the moment,” would be laughed at for his antiquated notions and virtuous imbecility, and be thrust aside, if not as positively insane, at least as impracticable, unavailable, and antedeluvian? Ye politicians who, cap in hand, stand before the people, to serve whose interests you profess to have abandoned your own by renouncing your private pursuits, and for whose sake you are ready either to live or die, just as it may please their will, remember the oracular words of him in whom the people had so much confidence. “*You must, on no occasion, and under no pretext, divorce from candor or truth: you must use no words susceptible of “double meaning”*” under the penalty of being discarded with contempt by the people—that dear object of your sincere love. Ye Presidents, Governors, Senators, Representatives, and all others in authority, remember that you must, forsooth, “*be positive and candid in all your answers “to necessary inquiries.”*” Indeed! Indeed, General Jackson! Were these your expectations? O, generous credulity of a noble heart! Is “an open, candid and virtuous course” to be pursued by our public functionaries, the *sine qua non* condition on which they are to hold office? “Is there no case in our government where candor and truth are not to “be used”? Tell it not in Gath—and, above all, tell it not in Washington, or beware of an insurrection from the very stones of the Capitol. Alas! venerated patriot, rise from thy tomb, and if thou art not afraid of polluting thy gray hair, venture into the purlieus of the White House, stalk into that Senate formerly graced by thyself, by Clay, Webster, Calhoun and such demi-gods; stoop to enter, if such an effort is within thy power, into the House of Representatives; or rather, ascend the highest summit of the Alleghanies, and survey the broad surface of thy



country—see that ocean of falsehood and corruption which surging up slowly but irresistibly, is now convulsed into tempestuous waves by the tridents of fanaticism and unholy ambition; vouchsafe a glance at those ignoble halls, those secret marts and fairs for office and preferment, where presides King Caucus, or the tyrant Convention; see who are those they select as the worthiest in the land, and recommend to the suffrages of the people; and wilt thou make thyself guilty of the solemn mockery of preaching “morality, candor and sincerity,” to such as these! Would it not emphatically be the voice in the wilderness? No,—at such a sight, gathering round thy brows thy well earned laurels, shrouding thyself in thy immortal fame, thou wouldst shrink from the task, and if retaining aught of the sensibilities of our race, wouldst return to thy place of repose with a pang of despair at the loss of thy patriotic illusions.

The reputed stern inflexibility of General Jackson’s temper would make it suppose, that he would not be easily induced to adopt for himself, or recommend to others, any compromise either in public or private affairs. But that such a supposition would not be correct, is demonstrated by the following observations made by him in connection with a transaction to which he advised his pupil to submit, rather than engage in a law-suit :

“Without great attention,” said he, “law is expensive, and success now-a-days cannot be counted on; and before you engage in a suit, investigate the subject well, and know whether you can give your attention to it. For, better to abandon the property altogether than to run the risk of bringing a suit and be cast.” General Jackson had been a lawyer and a Judge, and few will deny that, on this occasion, he spoke “like a Daniel come to judgment.”

The intense interest taken by General Jackson in the struggle of oppressed freedom all over the world, is finely illustrated in a passage of a letter dated at Washington, on the 20th of January, 1824, and addressed to his young friend. It is not a mere empty parade of love for liberal institutions, but the warm outpouring of a generous conviction, the unbooming of heart to heart within the secret precincts of intimacy and confidential friendship. “It cannot but be gratifying to me, dear E.,” writes he, “to see this day (the 8th of January) commemorated by the American people, and particularly for the praiseworthy object of raising funds to aid the oppressed and gallant Greeks. It must be gratifying to every bosom that cherishes as it ought warm feelings for the liberty of mankind, and a just abhorrence of the cruelties that have been inflicted on the oppressed Greeks and the patriots of Spain. It will have another good effect. It will keep in the recollection of this nation what

“ gallant men can do when united, and act as a stimulant to others to  
 “ brave deeds, should our country again be invaded by a foreign enemy. ”

A sure criterion to judge of a man's heart, is the degree of sincere admiration which he feels for those great and virtuous beings who have endeared themselves to the whole human race, and whose memories are embalmed in those immortal sepulchres prepared for them by history, where they repose in state, exposed to the fond gaze of successive generations. On the day he dated the letter from which is the preceding quotation, he had been presented with pistols which had been given by Lafayette to Washington. He thus expresses what he felt on the occasion :

“ I view it as the highest honor that could be paid to me, to be  
 “ considered worthy by the representatives of that immortal man, the  
 “ Father of his Country, to be a fit repository for the implements used  
 “ by him in the procurement and establishment of our national indepen-  
 “ dence and liberty. It is more gratifying to my feelings than all the  
 “ honors my country has hitherto bestowed upon me. ”

There has been an impression but too widely spread throughout the country, that General Jackson was a profane man, whose christian faith, if he ever had any, only budded forth when he was verging towards the grave. Those who may have done him so much injustice by forming so wrongful an opinion of his character, will be happy to be undeceived by reading a letter of condolence which, so late back as the 12th of December, 1824, he wrote from Washington City. Was he not a christian, the stern warrior who penned these touching and pious lines, with which he attempted to soothe the afflictions of one he loved ?

“ My dear E.—Your letter of the 7th inst has come to hand, announcing the death of my young friend and your much lamented brother.  
 “ Mrs. Jackson and myself tender to you what we sensibly feel—our sincere condolence on this melancholy occasion. When death comes, he  
 “ respects neither age nor merit ;—he sweeps from this earthly existence the sick and the strong, the rich and the poor, and should teach us to  
 “ live to be prepared for death. Our deceased friend was a youth of  
 “ great promise, snatched from us at an interesting period of life, and  
 “ when we least expected it, thereby showing us the great uncertainty of  
 “ all earthly things ;—but we have a hope that he is removed from all the  
 “ troubles of this world to a blissful state of immortality in the next ;  
 “ and we are taught by the scripture “to mourn not for the dead, but for  
 “ the living. ” He is gone—our tears cannot restore him ; and let us  
 “ be consoled in the hope that he is at rest and happy in the arms of  
 “ our crucified Saviour. Another consolation may be derived from the  
 “ letter you have enclosed me, stating that whatever could be done during  
 “ his illness for his relief and preservation was cheerfully extended.

“ Be therefore consoled—you have many sincere friends, and some dear relatives; and although you have experienced the loss of many, still your misfortunes are not greater than those which befall others. You should remember, too, that to be reconciled with our lot is a duty we owe not less to ourselves than to that God to whose providence we are all committed. Against His will it is vain to repine, however trying the affliction, or great the burden; while a calm submission to that will makes human fortitude triumph over the grave, and conducts us to those happy regions in which we love to believe our young friend immortal, at the same time we are aided in preparation to overtake him there.”

Whenever in this correspondence he glances at public affairs, he shows that manliness, that unwavering love of justice, that keen appreciation of men and things, which distinguished him in his military and civil career.

The extract which I give below, from a letter written at the Hermitage, and bearing date July 25, 1825, will not, I believe, be read without interest, and will support my premises.

“ Dear E.—From your letter I presume your Southern tour has afforded you some amusement and much information. The scenes in Georgia give you a view of human nature under the influence of party excitement and selfish political views. The world had formed an exalted opinion of Governor Troup’s talents, but I believe his late communications have shorn him of his character of high talents in public estimation and of decorous deportment. His whole conduct of late has afforded evidence of derangement from some cause. He certainly never could have obtained the high standing for talents he had, without possessing some merit, which his late communications appear to be entirely destitute of. Nobody did believe that the Indians had any intention of commencing hostilities on the whites. The whole excitement was produced by designing white men, to draw the public attention from the means used in obtaining this fictitious treaty, signed by one or two Chiefs, and the rest self-created for the purpose of multiplying signers to the instrument. I am sure that, with the evidence now before the nation, the Senate would not have ratified the treaty. What will be the course that will be taken, will much depend on the information communicated to Congress by the President, procured through his special agent, sent to the nation for the purpose of investigation. When it was ratified, I was not in the Senate, being confined to my room by the severe indisposition of Mrs. Jackson. Had I been present, seeing none of the old chiefs’ names to it but McIntosh, I should have moved its postponement and called for information from the President.”

In another communication of the 10th November, of the same year, he resumes the subject :

“I regret that my friend, General Gaines, permitted himself to be drawn into a political newspaper controversy with Governor Troup. However justifiable his conduct may be in this affair, still it will afford Troup’s friends in Congress a strong ground to assail the general as a military man—and it is to be tested how far the Executive will sustain him, should his own popularity be in the least endangered thereby.” He then expresses the hope that the Executive will stand by General Gaines; but he remarks: “He (General Gaines,) and myself have had sufficient experience to know, unless shielded by positive instructions, that the Executive will shield itself from responsibility if it can, and throw it upon its subordinate. I hope my fears for the General may be groundless: still I cannot but feel for the safety of my friend, when I see the avenue through which he may be assailed and his feelings corroded by Congress.

I need not point out here as a trait of character, the amiable solicitude of General Jackson for his friend and companion in arms, because the tenacity and ardor of his friendship has always been proverbial. For this rare quality the world has already given him full credit.

On the 8th of December, reverting to the same theme, in which he seemed to take so deep an interest, he said:—

“I am happy to be informed, that the President has refused to listen to the demand of the Governor of Georgia for the arrest of General Gaines, and I hope the treaty with the Indians, for all the lands within the limits of Georgia, will put to rest this disagreeable subject—the discussion of which would have involved some of the most delicate questions that could be brought before Congress, and is well calculated to disturb the harmony of our country, as well as the feelings of our friend General Gaines, who would, no doubt, have been assailed by his enemies in Congress. State rights and military despotism are themes where eloquence can be employed, and the feelings of the nation aroused. I fondly hope that, in consequence of the treaty you mention, both these themes will slumber for some other occasion.”

The belief entertained by some, that General Jackson was so self-willed and so wedded to his own arbitrary opinions, that he was at all times regardless of the views entertained by others, and that he obstinately pursued his own headlong course without caring for approbation or blame, is discountenanced by the following passage of a letter to a mere youth, his pupil, to whose judgment, however valuable in itself, he might have been pardoned for not attaching much importance, if we consider his superiority in age, experience and station in life.

Here is however his language in 1825:

“I am happy to find that you approve of my retiring from political life. My judgment said it was proper to do so. I have always thought it wrong to recommend maxims to others that I did not



"practice on myself. I am getting too old to abandon a course I have practiced upon through a long life. My judgment approved and dictated the course I have taken. It is a great pleasure to me that it is approved by the virtuous and good. I feel regardless of what my political enemies may say on the subject. They would rejoice if I was to do an act injurious to those republican maxims I have always advocated."

On the 24th of January, 1826, he wrote:

"There never ought to be confidence reposed in political men who are in pursuit of popularity, particularly when they have given evidence of abandonment of principle, and bartered for self-aggrandizement."

Thus felt the Roman like patriot, thus spoke the sage of the Hermitage. Let the people, let leaders of parties, let, above all, those democrats who pretend to be the only disciples dyed in the wool, whom General Jackson would recognize if alive, listen to the oracular sentence of him whom they affect to worship. Let those who have eyes see, and those who have ears hear. O Scribes and Pharisees, what says the master.

"There never ought to be confidence reposed in political men who are in *pursuit of popularity*, particularly when they have given evidence of abandonment of principle and bartered for self-aggrandizement."

But what is the doctrine of modern days, as inaugurated by leaders, who frequently invoke the name of that great and pure man, in support of their demagogism?

"No confidence," they say, "is to be reposed in political men who are *not in pursuit of popularity*, because such men are too proud and too aristocratic, and disdain to court the favor of the people."

This is what they avow openly, and secretly they whisper among themselves:

"We must support for office no man, who would not *abandon principle*, should the occasion require it, and *who would not barter* to secure success, because he is too stiff-necked to be available, and because we could not mould him to our own uses and purposes."

Such is, at least, their rule of action, if not exactly their language, and the few exceptions which may occur do but prove the generality of that rule. Let those political sectarians preach their new tenets as they please, but let them not deny that they secede from the creed professed by the great apostle of democracy.

At an epoch when an insatiable thirst for gold incessantly goads men to invent the most ingenious means to obtain it, *per fas et nefas*, it is

refreshing to see the high-toned disinterestedness and exquisite delicacy exhibited in money matters, by one who not only was not rich, but whose pecuniary means were frequently stinted. It seems that the young man whose estate General Jackson had administered, on taking possession of it when of age, and on examining the accounts thereto appertaining, had not found the customary charge which administrators bring in for their services, and had expostulated with General Jackson for the omission. The answer is worthy of the hero whose name we venerate, and bears date May 28, 1826 :

“I have no charge,” he says, “against your estate; I never charged  
“an orphan one cent for either time or expense, and I am sure I will  
“not begin with you.”

It has been set down, if not doctrinally, at least practically, that he who should refuse to electioneer, and to stoop to all the usual arts which are resorted to by aspirants to political distinction, cannot be safely taken up by any party as a candidate for any office whatever, because that individual, however pure might be his moral character, however great might be his talents, would be sure to be reproached with being an aristocrat—a man too proud to curry favor with the people by shaking hands with the multitude—which reproach, if not contradicted by great sacrifices of personal dignity accomplished in an ubiquitous “electioneering tour,” would be sufficient to ensure his defeat. Whether General Jackson approved of such a doctrine, or of such a practice, will be shown in the two following extracts :

“HERMITAGE, June 22, 1826.

“I cannot say whether it will be in my power, with Mrs. Jackson, to  
“visit the Harrodsburgh Springs. I have great hesitancy in going into  
“Kentucky now. There is much excitement there at present on their  
“local policy, and my enemies might not only say that I went there to  
“influence their elections, but that I was on an electioneering tour.  
“These considerations have hitherto prevented me from visiting the  
“Springs in Kentucky and in the North, and will prevent me, so long  
“as my name is before the nation for public office. Let others do as  
“they may, for myself, if brought into office, it must be by the uninflu-  
“enced voice of the people. It must be on the pure principle of our  
“government—that the people have a right to govern.”

To that letter he adds a postscript in which, addressing the wife of his young friend, he says :

“I need not express to you how much gratification it would afford  
“Mrs. Jackson and myself to visit you and Edward (her husband) at  
“Cincinnati, or to meet you at the Springs in Kentucky; but the politi-  
“cal ferment now raging in Kentucky in relation to their State politics,

“forbids my entering that State until it subsides. Indeed, as long as my name is before the nation, there would be a great delicacy in my traveling beyond the limits of my State. My enemies would say it was an electioneering tour. If I go into office, it must be by the free will of the people. To keep clear of imputations confines me at home.”

These are noble sentiments. But what an old, impracticable foggy, General Jackson would now be reputed to be with such superannuated notions! And what convention, were it entirely composed of those who swear by his venerated memory, would, in these days of wire pulling and political legerdemain, take up for any office a man who should declare that he is opposed to an “electioneering tour,” or to those means by which the people are captivated or deluded, and not left to their “free will.”

As a proof of the religious vein which pervades the whole stratum of General Jackson’s character, and which I wish firmly to establish, as it is perhaps that part of it which may be the most contested in consequence of long standing prejudices and misconceptions, I quote the following passage from a letter written on the 22d of December, 1826:

“We, (Mrs. Jackson and myself) with pious hearts and great good feeling, present our blessings to the child, etc., etc. As this son advances in years, may his intellect and virtue strengthen with his strength, and expand until he becomes the admiration of his day, and the comfort and stay of his parents in their declining years.”

Again the same piety shows itself, when on the 19th of September, 1828, he pens these lines from the Hermitage:

“We have a very doleful prospect here; we have not had rain to wet the earth one inch for three months—every vegetable burnt up—our cattle starving—the springs in many places dried up and no prospect of rain—the earth so parched that we can sow no fall crop—no turnips, potatoes or cabbages—and our crops of cotton and corn not half crop. Still I trust in a kind providence who doeth all things well, that He will not scourge us with famine.”

As a contrast to the degrading contradiction which we daily discover between the public and private sentiments of our modern politicians, it is delightful to observe the inflexible consistency preserved by General Jackson, from the beginning to the end of his career. What he avowed before the people, he never ceased strenuously to advocate in the confidential communications of his closest intimacy. He was a massive block of granite, hewn in its complete and uniform entity from the same quarry, and presenting on all sides the same hard substance to the touch of examination.

"I am too feeble," he wrote in 1828, "to respond to that part of your letter that treats of our political matters. I can only say that the view you have taken of the Constitution and the powers of Congress to create corporations, are in my opinion correct. Congress has no power to create corporations, or banks of paper issues, or to carry on internal improvements within the States, nor have the States the constitutional right to create banks of paper issues. The right to coin money and to regulate the value thereof is given to Congress, and the States are prohibited from coining money, issuing bills of credit, or making anything a tender in the payment of debts, but gold and silver coin. But now the battle is to be fought between the aristocracy of the few against the democracy of numbers, &c., &c. The question is, whether the people are to continue the sovereign power in their own hands and our republican system be perpetuated, or whether we shall be governed by the combined money power of the aristocracy, through their paper banking system; and all who wish to hand down to their children that happy republican system bequeathed to them by their revolutionary fathers, must now take their stand against this consolidated, corrupting money power, and put it down, or their children will become hewers of wood and drawers of water to this aristocratic ragoeracy, through the corrupting power of the modern banking swindling system. Every lover of freedom and of our republican system must now put on his armor, and boldly meet this daring and insidious foe.

"The sub-treasury system, as it is called, must be carried into effect, or you will never have any purity of Legislation, either in the General, or State governments. It will be carried by the people. Pennsylvania will be at her post, and continue to merit the title of the "Keystone" to the political arch. I have no fear of New York, or Ohio, though the money power will be wielded in corrupting the people as far as it can be wielded."

Were General Jackson in existence, he would see that the principal danger to the continuation of our republican system does not proceed from "the power wielded by the banks of the country," but from the corruption of the ballot box, by an influence coming from other sources than the vaults of our paper mints. He would see that those corporations to which has been given "the right to coin money and to regulate the value thereof," dangerous as they may be, are far less to be suspected and to be watched, than those self-emanated, card-like packed corporations, called "Conventions," which "coin candidates for office, and regulate the value thereof." He would see that in the year of our Lord, 1856, "the battle is to be fought on a far different ground than in 1828;" he would see that many of those whom he thought to be his best tried veterans, his most faithful lieutenants, have deserted their old banners



on this most convenient of all pleas: "that the exigencies of the times having changed, we also must change." He would see that there is a certain "ragocracy," or rabblecracy, rioting in the creation of all sorts of *isms*, which is far more nefarious than the "corrupting power of the modern banking swindling system." He would see that the system of obtaining nominations through packed and bought up conventions, and of governing the people through an oligarchy of bankrupt politicians, who, instead of governing, ought to be pilloried by the people, is fast undermining the institutions founded by our ancestors, and even completely altering their very nature; and he would, to use his own language, "call on every lover of freedom and of our republican system to put on his armor, and boldly meet this daring and insidious foe." How his call—how the shout of Achilles—would be received by the Greeks of the democratic army under its present organization, or by their opponents, may reasonably be a matter of doubt, when we survey the operations of recent campaigns. But whatever were the delusions or illusions of General Jackson, they were always those of a generous nature.

Fortunately, his religious faith was founded on a surer basis than his political one, and not so pregnant with disappointments; and if, on reading his letters, it is impossible not to smile, though it be in sadness, at the reliance which he placed in some earthly things, it is no slight gratification to find how firmly he trusted in Him who deceiveth not, as exhibited in this touching and pious effusion which gushed out of his heart on the 18th September, 1828:

"I have met with a great bereavement. I have lost my friend, Col. Earle, who died on the 16th inst., with a few days' sickness. He was my steadfast friend, my traveling companion; he was pure, upright, and an honest man: but a kind providence has removed him from me to a happier clime than this. I will soon follow him, when I hope to meet with him in the realms of bliss, where the wicked cease to trouble and the weary are at rest."

The same Christian resignation is exhibited in a letter of the 4th of October, 1843:

"I thank you and your amiable family for the interest you take in my health and life. A kind and benevolent providence has thus far prolonged my existence here below, regardless of the wishes of my enemies. How much longer it may be His gracious will to prolong my days, God knoweth. I await patiently His call, always ready to say: 'The Lord's will be done!'"

And again, on the 20th December, 1844, he says:

"My own health is not improved. I am suffering under great debili-

“ty and shortness of breath, but submitting to the Lord’s will with calmness and resignation.”

The evidences of his religious turn of mind, running through a period of more than thirty years, are sufficient to show how misrepresented he was when held up to the world as an infidel, or at least as one who had but a dim perception of the truths of Christianity. This error originated, no doubt, from his never having put on that sanctimonious garb which is thought by many to be the necessary indication of faith. Satisfied with being a Christian at heart, he never paused to consider what demonstrations *policy* required him to make in the temple or in other public places, in order to acquire a reputation for piety. But, whatever may have been the causes of the injustice done him in that respect, I rejoice to have had the opportunity of proving that the imputations laid at his door in relation to his want of religion, were founded in error and prejudice.

I shall conclude this essay by showing, that General Jackson’s remarkable sagacity did not forsake him, even when old age and infirmities were fast hurrying him to the grave.

On the 17th of August, 1842, he wrote :

“I have just learned that Captain Tyler has headed Captain Botts and the protecting tariffites, by vetoing the Tariff Bill and its appendage, the distribution of the revenue from the sales of Public Lands. This puts to rest all the wicked proceedings of the extra Session of Congress, except the Bankrupt Law, which, in its details, throws wide open the door of corruption, perjury and fraud. This, too, will be repealed next Session of Congress.”

We all know how prophetic these words proved to be.

In connection with the present issues, there is a remarkable passage in a letter which he wrote on the 9th of February, 1844 :

“I rejoice to find Louisiana once more under the flag of *true democracy*. I trust she will amend her Constitution so as to extend the right of suffrage to all freemen of twenty-one years old and upwards, with certain residence in the State and Parish where they may vote. This done, *the monied aristocracy of New Orleans, with foreign influence, can never again crush the democracy, as she has for many years past*. Principles will hereafter triumph over the money power in Louisiana, and you will become a happy and independent people, clear of either public or private indebtedness; and the people only taxed for an economical government.”

Whether General Jackson’s dreams of Arcadian felicity under the benign and genial influence of general suffrage now spread over

the fertile bosom of Louisiana have been realized; whether her citizens are "free from either public or private indebtedness;" and whether they, and principally the inhabitants of New Orleans, "are taxed only for an economical government," are left to the consideration of future constitution-mongers, and to the worshipers of Utopian theories. But, one thing may be recommended to the immediate attention of those politicians who think, that any doubt expressed in relation to the genuine nature and purity of what they are pleased to name democracy, cannot come from the lips of a lover of the people, and is tantamount to treason. It is, that General Jackson uses these expressions: "true democracy," thereby evidently granting that there is something like "untrue democracy." Let it also be remarked that so far back as 1844, his keen eye had detected, and his excellent judgment had denounced, the existence in our bosom of a *foreign influence*, be it monied or political, which was used as an instrument to crush, and which had *effectually crushed* democracy.

But the democracy of Louisiana, in 1856, denies that there ever was, and that there is among us, a foreign influence capable of crushing anything. Whether that democracy is a "true democracy" according to General Jackson's conceptions; whether it acts, on all occasions, in conformity with those correct principles and noble sentiments laid down in those letters from which I have made the above extracts; whether General Jackson was in his dotage when he asserted that there was among us a "crushing foreign influence;" and whether the democratic party in Louisiana, constituted as it is, and with the peculiar antecedents attributed to it, speaks an honest truth, when it affirms that foreign influence is a fiction, are questions which we leave aside as requiring an investigation not compatible with the limits assigned to this essay.

I said on its threshold, that its object was only to give a profile view, and not a complete portrait of General Jackson. All his features and his full length proportions cannot be embraced in the frame within which I am compelled to confine this crayon sketch. I will only observe, before I dismiss the subject which I have so imperfectly treated, that what seems to me to constitute the grand distinguishing traits of General Jackson's character, was his unlimited confidence in the good sense and safe instincts of the people; his indomitable energy in the field and in the cabinet; and his thorough honesty of purpose, which was proof against all temptation, and which never permitted him to hesitate or to halt in his march. General Jackson's intellect was of a

sound texture. It was compact and strong; it was gifted with quick perception and decision, with superior discrimination and judgment; but there was in it neither amplitude nor brilliancy. It was irresistible, like the club of Hercules within arm's length, but it would not have flashed through the air, between heaven and earth, like Apollo's dart, and struck its aim on the very verge of the horizon. The grasp of his mind, as far as it could reach, was sure and overpowering; but that mind, improved only by a very limited education, had been left chiefly to its natural resources, and cannot be supposed, in consequence of this untoward circumstance, to have obtained that degree of development of which it was capable. Therefore, exalted as his place is in the history of his country, it is not to be wondered at, if he is not put, intellectually, on the same level with some of his illustrious contemporaries and rivals. But in other respects, he towered far above the host among which he struggled during his long career. For instance, he had pre-eminently that kind of courage which, in the opinion of Napoleon the Great, is the most rare of all—that courage which consists in calmly taking a determination in the solitude of the closet, and in steadfastly adhering to it, be the consequences what they may. His belief in the moral and intellectual rectitude of the people, and in their capacity for self-government, was as intense as that of the most devout worshiper in the object of his adoration. It was with him a sort of religion. Thus his love of popular government was the ruling passion of his life,—“strong even in death;” and his conviction of its being the best for all mankind, and the one destined to be ultimately the most durable, was so deeply inlaid in him that it had become, as it were, a component part of his nature. His integrity was so pure, his patriotism was so vivid, that they diffused a sort of illumination through his mind, and supplied in him the place of genius. To those two sources he is indebted for his best inspirations, and for the grandeur of his career. They threw around him a visible halo, which struck the people with admiration and awe, and which inspired them with implicit faith in him whom they had nicknamed “Old Hickory,” as expressive of the rugged and solid substance of which they thought he was made up. It invested him with all the powers of a dictator, and he repaid the unbounded confidence of the many-headed sovereign with absolute fealty and devotion. But he never courted popularity. Before resolving, or acting, he never bent his ear to the ground to listen to its pulsations, or to that low rumbling which, running over its surface, indicates to time-serving and cunning



politicians which way is the march of the people, and enables them to turn in that direction, and place themselves, if possible, at the head of the moving mass. But, erect and lofty, he looked forward to discover the landmarks and beacons of right and truth, and towards them he strode fearlessly, without previously ascertaining the number of his followers. Whatever were the errors of which he was susceptible, it was impossible, morally and intellectually organized as we know him to have been, that he should ever have stooped to deception, trickery and flattery. His indignation was always fiercely excited by the bare shadow of meanness and treachery. That candor and truth which he so earnestly recommended in his letters, he observed and practiced himself. If we can easily imagine emergencies when General Jackson might have remained silent from policy, still it is impossible for one who has the slightest insight into his character, even to suppose that his stern and inflexible honesty could ever have been brought to compromise with truth—the more so that what was the organic disposition of his temper had been strengthened by an influence, which so very few knew to exist in him. I mean his sincere Christian faith, and his reliance on the incessant interference or interposition of that power to which he so frequently alludes in his letters, and which, even in his sorest trials and afflictions, he calls “a kind and benevolent providence.”

But I have done. As a member of the Committee appointed by the Legislature of Louisiana to superintend the erection of a suitable monument to General Jackson in one of the public squares of New Orleans, I have cheerfully discharged the duties imposed on me, and I have the satisfaction to see the equestrian statue of the Hero proudly standing on the very spot where he had marshaled the patriotic band of citizen-soldiers, who, under his guidance, triumphed over the veterans of England. Thus has nobly been exhibited the gratitude of the State which owed so much to his prowess. The present task is an humbler one; but it has been a labor of love—a tribute from the heart. The colossal monument of granite and brass was erected to the great and successful captain. This modest copper medallion is dedicated to the memory of the Christian, the kind, truthful, honest and benevolent man.

CHARLES GAYARRÉ.

SARATOGA, *September 15, 1856.*











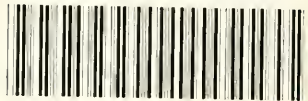








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